

For Immediate Release September 21, 2005 Contacts:

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Sens. McManus and Van Woerkom call on governor to preserve Senate-approved funding for MYCF

LANSING – After the Senate voted Wednesday to provide funding for the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in next year's Corrections budget, Sens. Michelle McManus and Gerald Van Woerkom issued a letter to Governor Granholm, calling on her to approve the budget as passed and not veto funding for the prison.

In the letter, McManus and Van Woerkom strongly urge the governor not to line-item veto the Baldwin funding, as she has promised to do. The letter states, "A veto will economically devastate the poorest county in Michigan. Every Michigan governor over the past 50 years has found ways to help this chronically desperate community. We respectfully submit that this is not the time, nor should you be the one, to plunge this county back into despair."

While MYCF will remain open under the Senate-approved legislation, language was included in the bill to encourage contract renegotiations. This will provide for the realization of greater savings and the ability to operate the facility at a more efficient and appropriate security level.

"I am grateful to my colleagues for coming together to find the money to spare the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility," said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau on the floor of the Senate this morning. "Now that we have approved the Corrections Department budget, the governor has an important choice to make. I hope she chooses to support the hardworking families of Lake County. They deserve it."

"Closing the Baldwin facility doesn't make sense for Lake County or for Michigan as a whole," said Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores. "The Legislature has demonstrated that we can balance the Corrections budget and still protect these important jobs."

House Bill 4831, which included the Department of Corrections budget, passed the Senate 27 to 11. The bill now goes to the governor for her signature.

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Editors' note: The complete text of the letter is below. In addition, broadcast-quality audio comments from Sen. McManus are available on the Senate Majority Multimedia Link at: http://senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/mcmanus/index.htm.

September 21, 2005

Dear Governor Granholm:

We urge you, in the strongest possible way, to NOT line-item veto monies for the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility.

A veto will economically devastate the poorest county in Michigan. Every Michigan governor over the past 50 years has found ways to help this chronically desperate community. We respectfully submit that this is not the time, nor should you be the one, to plunge this county back into despair.

Promises of "job retraining" or "job placement" help are of no value. In Lake County, there <u>are</u> no jobs and it would be unrealistic, even unfair, to promise job retraining and job placement for jobs that simply don't and won't exist.

Nearly 230 men and women and their families are looking to you to sustain their economic lifeline and we are confident, when you examine all of the facts, that you won't let them down. The facts are that the Baldwin School District, which serves the entire county, will teeter on the verge of bankruptcy, and the Village of Baldwin and Webber Township may not be far behind. Unemployment, already very high, is projected to go over 20%.

The issue is not just jobs alone. With sentencing-guideline revisions stalled indefinitely, this Administration is likely to face a 1,000-bed shortage in the next year, which you yourself have acknowledged.

The MYCF was built as a modern, high-security prison and can be used to house any population the DOC needs to have housed. Housing adult inmates at the MYCF will greatly reduce its costs and would eliminate the need for the DOC to open older, more costly facilities for adult inmates.

In addition, GEO has made a number of proposals for cost savings, but there has not been so much as a response from the Department of Corrections. We think it is a tragic error to spend \$3.5 million on uniform dry-cleaning and \$3.5 million for a jail program that no longer exists while closing a prison, the <u>net</u> savings from which would be \$7.5 million at best.

Governor, we urge you, at a <u>bare minimum</u>, to keep this facility open for one more year. This will allow all affected parties to adequately examine and pursue possible alternative contract provisions to eliminate cost inefficiencies and policy issues related to the housing of young adult offenders at the MYCF, possible conversion of the facility to house adult male inmates in anticipation of increased DOC adult capacity requirements, or alternative use of the facility by federal, other state or local governmental agencies.

Extending the funding for at least one additional year will be seen as a caring gesture from a Governor who is concerned about all areas of Michigan. It will be recognition by the Governor of the great sacrifices made by the citizens of the Lake County region to invest in the infrastructure needed to support the prison and the impact that suddenly closing the facility will have on the region's economy.

At the least, please provide a fair amount of time for the community and the company to find realistic alternative uses for the facility should the DOC not require it beyond 2006.

Sincerely,